

Community Voice

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Travelogue South Africa

Student returns again to the land of townships, wine lands and breathtaking landscapes

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CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On the ride back from Newark International airport over the summer, my mother asked me to sum up my experience in South Africa in a sentence, my response, "I have to go back". After finals last semester I returned home, and once again was driven to the airport by my mother, the last words she said to me, as I frantically grabbed my bags and tried to make a dash for the entrance was, "Don't forget, you have to come home."

From the indescribable poverty of the townships to the gorgeous, breathtaking landscapes of the wine lands and coast, the amazing thing about Cape Town is that it is such a land of extremes.

So many ideas and stories run through my head as I think about my time there, but it was the experience of physically being there that made the trip worth it. While I would be spending Christmas in Cape Town I found it funny that it would not only be my first Christmas away from home, but it would also be 85 degrees outside.

The cultural encounters were amazing. One that sticks out to me occurred when I went to Boulder Beach. It is a popular tourist spot, the area even has residents who own homes on the shoreline, but the beach also has another resident, penguins. People from all over the world come to this beach just to see them, I still cannot get over the fact that they are there.

I had a chance to experience college nightlife there as well. My friend Alan, a student at Cape Town University whom I befriended over the summer, introduced me to their nightlife scene. I never imagined students would gather at a local bar, have a pint of warm beer and



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEVON DOW

Above, Devon Dow hangs out with his friend Zach in South Africa. Right, a view from Table Mountain of Cape Town.

shoot darts while Jay-Z is blasting from the speakers.

The conversations I had with some of the young people there were incredible. The students I met at Cape Town University were from all walks of life, different ethnicities and religions, like UNC Asheville should be. I caught myself staring a few times when I would be introduced someone who was white, an Asian who was born in Angola or someone was just returned from vacationing in Kenya.

What struck me the most was the fact that they knew so much about U.S. history, culture and government. I thought to myself, "How many students in the United States know this much about South Africa?" While there was criticism about our country's pop culture, foreign policy and "Mr. Bush's war" as they called it, the overall response I came away with was positive in relation to the United States. It was refreshing to see students, although not in the world's most powerful country

have so much ambition and pride in their country. The fact that they too want to make a difference in this world helped reinforce my theory that people are good.

While they might sound simple, two things I came to appreciate while in Cape Town were taking baths and Coca-Cola. In my friend's bathroom they had no shower head, so you literally had to take a bath. With the constant hustle and bustle in the United States, I explained to my friends that we are a nation who shower; we do not make the time to take baths. I could not even remember the last time I did.

After realizing I was becoming addicted to taking baths, I realized that I had become addicted to the South African version of Coca-Cola. The sweetness of it was something that I could never get over and I am not fond of soda. Besides Coca-Cola, I was most impressed with the food and beverages of Cape Town. With Cape Town sitting on the coast line they have some of the best seafood. I suggest Hilda's Kitchen restaurant



and anything on the menu.

During my last week in Cape Town, my friends family took a trip to Johannesburg. We went to a play and what is now my favorite museum. The Apartheid Museum is something that everyone needs to experience. A quote that stuck with me, "It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails."

When you enter, you are handed a card and have to go through as either black or white. I had read so much about the apartheid before coming to South Africa, but the Apartheid Museum did an amazing job of showing just how horrible it really was.

The pictures were so powerful. I felt so inspired by some and others I found appalling. There were all types of mediums used to get the different points across, including picture boxes, sound bites, video

clips, quotations, newspaper articles and personal mementos.

My favorite part of the museum was the section that focused on women and how the apartheid era affected them. Usually history focuses on men, but this portion of the museum showcased how independent, assertive and strong women were during the struggle and end of apartheid.

Another part of the museum that was particularly interesting was the section about Soweto, the township that we visited and had lunch in. It was interesting to see the history of the township in a formal museum as well as hearing about it from the people of Soweto.

There was a wall with the names of all of the people who were killed in the Soweto massacre that reminded me of the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. It was disturbing and powerful

to see so many names on a wall and think about what was done to them. As I left the museum, I told my friend if the United States had a slavery museum in Washington, D.C., all hell would break loose.

Traveling to South Africa has taught me many things about people. While technology continues to advance rapidly, we live vicariously through images that we see on a screen nothing is like the actual physical experience and communication. While there, I realized how little television I watched and how little I used technology, as if I did not need it.

The friendships I made, the ideas exchanged and views about the way others see the world really helped me get a better understanding of their needs and wants. I hope I represented the United States well, while I was there.

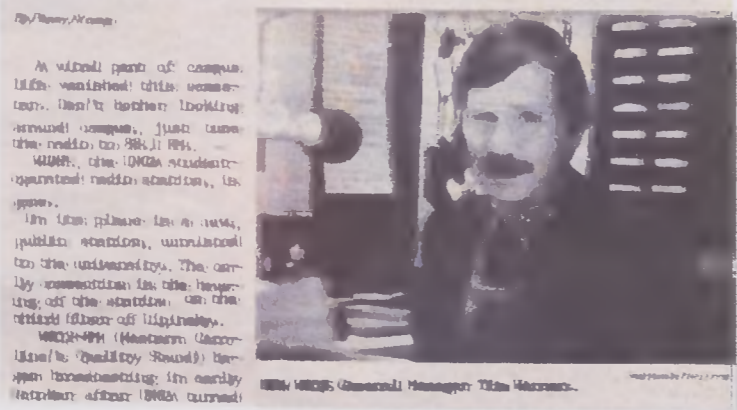
Ghosts of Campus Past

This semester *The Blue Banner* will feature excerpts from previous issues of UNC Asheville campus newspapers. *The Kaleidoscope* started publishing in 1982, renaming itself *The Blue Banner* in 1984. UNCA's first paper *The Ridgerunner* published from 1965 to 1979. The *UNCA Free Press* published one issue in 1974. *The Rag and Bones Shop* published from 1979 until 1982. For complete copies of past issues of student newspapers, visit our new Web site at www.thebluebanner.net.

From the *The Blue Banner*

December 5, 1984

New station pulls students from airways



"New station pulls students from airways"

In 1975, UNC Asheville received a FCC license to broadcast WUNF, an educational radio station, on 88.1 FM. Programming ranged from rock documentaries to variety shows with the aid of students running the station. Less than 10 years later, UNCA turned over the license to the Western North Carolina National Public Radio, Inc. because of rising costs for required improvements. Programming changed to more classical, jazz music and student participation dropped. Currently, the station broadcasts NPR news and classical music.

Looking for romance? Want to buy or sell your text books? In need of a roommate? Get a classified ad in *The Blue Banner!*

Contact us at banner@unca.edu

The Soapbox

Senior DJ reflects on his experience reviving the Blue Echo



Column by Alex Bowser
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

To this day, I still don't understand Asheville. How could a town that seems to pride itself on embracing creativity, music and a cleverly marketed devotion to keeping its inhabitants "weird," harbor a public university with no FM radio station? It doesn't make sense.

However, this distressing circumstance wasn't always the case. WCQS began its broadcasting on our campus in 1979 with an initial 110 watts of power. After a lot of hard work and a successful expansion campaign, they relocated to downtown Asheville in 1985. Since then, they've added countless transmitters and translators, becoming the definitive public radio station for all of Western N.C.

As far as I know, WCQS's relocation marks the last date our campus ever transmitted via the beauty that is FM radio. Years later, FCC rulings crippled the ability to start Low Powered FM stations across the nation, thanks to the influence of large broadcasting companies fearing interference.

For 15 years, there was no form of radio at UNC Asheville.

Nonetheless, at the turn of the millennium, a few students took advantage of the underutilized bandwidth that our campus network then offered and started a "radio" station the only way they could: unofficially, with its sole existence on the Internet. This led to a new student organization, securing funding and a location on campus.: The Blue Echo was

born.

Soon thereafter, a few individuals took on the challenge of applying for an LPFM license from the FCC for 100.7Mhz. FCC officials eventually sent a rejection letter, citing errors about The Blue Echo's estimated Effective Radiated Power. Upon further review by The Blue Echo staff, no such errors could be found and claims arose that the rejection was a technical cover-up for a politically motivated decision. Since then, the frequency has been home to WRES-LP, The Urban Sounds of Asheville.

The station's board of directors is headed by Elder John R. Hayes. Hayes has been a member of the NAACP for over 40 years, with the Asheville branch since 1977, and is a truly inspirational member of our community. Allegations aside, the frequency went to an exceptionally more deserving group, one that undoubtedly serves our community far beyond the capacity of The Blue Echo.

And then, almost as quickly as it had begun, The Blue Echo died. Those involved with the initial effort graduated, and its fledgling existence was eventually handed over to other students unable to handle the responsibilities. The station took a plunge into a now familiar oblivion, souring its brief relationship with the Asheville community and instilling doubt into the minds of The Orange Peel and other sponsors.

Eventually, in the fall of 2005 I arrived at UNCA to find The Blue Echo in a recently deserted corner in our charming Highsmith Union. These were the glory days of a station manager that will remain unnamed - and her demise was where my coup began, a story that needs not to be told again.

Since I began my undeserving dictatorship as station manager of

I can safely say those involved with this installment of the Blue Echo saga have had quite a bit of fun on our journey...

The Blue Echo, we have managed to accomplish quite a bit. For the past three semesters, The Blue Echo has consistently had a 70 plus hour weekly schedule jam-packed with discs jockeys; web-streaming their souls out to a painfully small Internet audience scattered across the east coast. We've made major equipment and Web site upgrades, given away a large quantity of free tickets to the student body, and gotten in quite a bit of trouble for creative advertising.

We even threw an UNOFFICIAL '80s Dance that was so outrageous we're banned from hosting events at The Grey Eagle.

I can safely say that those of us who have been involved with my installment of The Blue Echo saga have had quite a bit of fun on our journey, despite the cyclic forces of discouragement.

The Blue Echo, in its current form, is still a relatively new organization and consists of a group of student volunteers. With a short legacy to uphold and a mostly trial and error management, the process of building a strong on-campus and local listener base and ample community ties has proven to be a much lengthier process than we expected.

Additionally, The Blue Echo has been plagued with the inability to form a continually supportive body of students or staff for effective

management. Again, The Blue Echo is entirely volunteer-based, with minimal incentives to be involved besides the opportunity to DJ. Being a DJ has the greatest potential for fun, and the least amount of responsibility. Why would most college students do anything else without stipends, course credit or FM?

So, when are we getting FM? Chances are, we're not.

Prior to the U.S. Senate recently passing the Local Community Radio Act of 2007, the FCC had closed all frequencies on the FM band in WNC. This new legislation may put a remote possibility of FM back into the future of The Blue Echo. However, previous calculations have shown that the cost would be too high and reception would be ultimately subpar, hardly reaching beyond the campus community itself, mostly due to heavy interference. Perhaps now, the issue of The Blue Echo and its lack of FM radio finally make sense to the frustrated DJs and equally frustrated potential listeners.

In spring of '08, my last semester at UNCA, I can guarantee that The Blue Echo staff and listeners will ultimately have a blast, and hopefully not the last.

I'd like to extend my greatest thanks to everyone who has been a part of The Blue Echo; in the past, present, and future; in hopes that The Blue Echo will never cease to SHOUTcast™ from the campus of UNCA.

For more information, visit theblueecho.com, or contact Alex Bowser at 250-FUNK or radio@unca.edu